

VZCZCXRO7481
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHLB #3084/01 2651605
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 221605Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5737
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0325
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0147

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 003084

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/23/2016

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [LE](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: MARWAN HAMADE SEES +BAD TIMES TO COME,

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) In a 9/22 meeting with the Ambassador and econoff, Minister of Telecommunications Marwan Hamadeh described a March 14-led cabinet attack on Wafiq Jezzini, the Hizballah-allied Surete General chief, the previous evening. He said that the cabinet also agreed to pay outstanding debts to landowners in the south, a decision that should pave the way for continued UNIFIL deployment. Speaking more broadly, Hamadeh saw "bad times to come," with ongoing Syrian efforts to destabilize Lebanon lasting until the next presidential election. End Summary.

HIZBALLAH ALLY ATTACKED
IN CABINET SESSION

12. (S) Hamadeh said that the 9/21 cabinet meeting featured an attack on Surete Generale (SG) Director General Wafiq Jezzini, a Shia officer with close ties to Hizballah. Acting Foreign Minister Ahmat Fatfat -- formally Jezzini's boss -- told the cabinet that Jezzini had refused an offer of foreign assistance intended to increase security service information sharing to combat smuggling. The assistance is designed to permit interconnectivity among the databases of Lebanon's various security services, something Jezzini allegedly wants to prevent. Moreover, Jezzini had been insubordinate, refusing to show up for two meetings called by Fatfat and one by Siniora, in the past week along.

13. (C) Further questioning from Prime Minister Siniora revealed an anomaly in SG's immigration procedures. Responsible for processing persons entering or leaving Lebanon, SG takes entry and exit cards submitted by travelers and enters them into a computer database. But Syrian visitors, using a procedure first established under the French mandate, do not need to use passports to cross Lebanon's land borders. (Nor do Lebanese need passports to enter Syria; nationals of the two countries can use their idea.) SG takes the entry cards completed by Syrian visitors aside, without entering them into the computer, and destroys the cards after six months. So not only are there no Lebanese computerized records of Syrians crossing Lebanon's borders at all, even the paper files date back only six months. Hamadeh suggested that this is an issue that might be able to be addressed by the UN, under UNSCR 1701.

14. (C) Jezzini was also under fire and may be disciplined for accepting foreign gifts without cabinet approval and falsifying documents to illegally obtain French citizenship for himself and his family, a crime he has been formally charged with in France. How, Hamadeh asked, can the GOL trust its passport and immigration service to someone who is wanted in France for falsely obtaining a foreign passport? Hamadeh was vague on the tangible results of this cabinet debate, saying that Fatfat was given authority to discipline Jezzini (including the possibility -- unlikely in our view -- of jailing Jezzini for up to 60 days).

15. (C) The legality of Fatfat's role as Acting Interior Minister also came up for discussion, but was put aside for another meeting because one minister objected that 'it was not on the agenda.' Hamadeh noted that, even before Interior Minister Hassan Sabah's February resignation from the cabinet -- when he took the fall for the February 5 "Danish cartoon" riots -- Fatfat had been designated by the cabinet as the Acting Interior Minister in Sabah's absence. Hamadeh mentioned that Sabah (whose resignation was never officially accepted yet who no longer participates in the cabinet) is considering leaving Lebanon for a while; if Sabah is not present, Fatfat could not be accused of holding the Interior portfolio "illegally."

LAND DEBTS TO BE PAID,
HELPING UNIFIL DEPLOY

16. (C) Hamadeh reported the cabinet also discussed several issues related to the south. The Ministry of Finance has been authorized to pay 1,400,000,000 Lebanese pounds (approximately USD 933,000) to southern landowners for lands

BEIRUT 00003084 002 OF 003

already in use by UNIFIL and authorized to quickly pay for any new properties needed, removing an impediment to further UNIFIL deployment. Hamadeh also said the press has exaggerated controversy over discrepancies in the blue line border with Israel; UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have agreed to a joint survey once Israel withdraws. The LAF yesterday, for the first time, sent a helicopter to examine what UNIFIL reported was a remaining Hizballah position. The LAF and UNIFIL are now satisfied that the position has been destroyed. (Note: This addresses a complaint UNIFIL Commander Pellegrini had a day earlier, that the LAF had not responded to information passed about a potential Hizballah position. End note.)

FRANCOPHONIE: MITRI
TO GO, NOT LAHOUD

17. (C) Hamadeh raised the invitation to this year's Francophonie summit, issued to Prime Minister Siniora rather than to President Lahoud, who has attended past summits. Siniora will send Minister of Culture Tarik Mitri, possibly at his own expense, in order to find a legal way to prevent Lahoud from attending without a formal cabinet decision. Substantial inquiries with the Maronite Patriarch Sfeir were made to avoid sensitivities that the Greek Orthodox Mitri will replace the Maronite Lahoud at the summit.

REDUCED SMUGGLING FROM SYRIA?

18. (C) Hamadeh commented he was hearing reports of reduced smuggling across the Syrian border; smugglers are being careful to avoid any excuse to increase checkpoints, border troops, or an expansion of 1701 authority. He expressed surprise after learning at a recent UNIFIL briefing what a huge network of roads and villages is between the border and border posts, which are often 7-12 kilometers from the actual border. Hamadeh commented that he believes that the airport must not be more secure because there were no longer Syrian

or Iranian planes flying in. He expressed confidence that, with extensive contacts in the security services, he would be aware if such planes landed.

¶9. (C) Citing an additional area of Syrian pressure, Hamadeh commented that Druze villages on Sunday will choose new electors/mukhtars who will select the next Druze religious leader, replacing a pro-Syrian stooge who was appointed by the then-Syrian-allied government. The Syrians, Hamadeh said, have been pressuring pro-Syrian Druze political figure Talal Arslan to pre-empt the electoral process (itself the product of a March 14-designed new law) and simply announce a pro-Syrian Druze religious leader first. (Note: The Druze elections and aftermath are worth monitoring, to see whether Arslan enlists his thugs to try to reverse the results. End note.)

HIZBALLAH) BAD TIMES TO COME

¶10. (C) Regarding Hizballah, Hamadeh predicted "bad times to come." He viewed sensitivities about a UN tribunal as just one dimension of a "nervous attitude" that will last until the "deadline" of the next presidential election, because there is a majority in place to elect a new president. He expected that Hizballah will try to keep Lebanon unbalanced to force the government to "talk" with them, push to avoid the tribunal, erode UNIFIL, stop any development on the Syrian border, delay the establishment of diplomatic relations with Syrian, and prevent disarmament of Palestinians outside the camps. Siniora's refusal to decentralize decision making is not helping, and is frustrating even his own ministers. Ramadan will be relatively quiet, Hamadeh predicted, but punctuated by many small nightly Iftar speeches by pro-Syrian Muslims, speeches that will incite people for action later.

¶11. (C) Regarding today's planned Hizballah rally, Hamadeh reported that Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri assured his fellow cabinet members that the will be moderate, and that he will attend. Hamadeh agreed that Nasrallah wants to reverse the impression that his base is shrinking, to rally support and use it as a foundation, and to prove that Israeli threats don't frighten him. Michel Aoun has not made an effort to promote the rally, in Hamadeh's opinion, because he was

BEIRUT 00003084 003 OF 003

afraid doing so might call attention to the fact that Aounist turnout will be small, reflecting little rank-and-file Aounist support for Hizballah. Hamadeh thought it unlikely that Nasrallah is unlikely to announce his support for Aoun for the Presidency at the rally.
FELTMAN